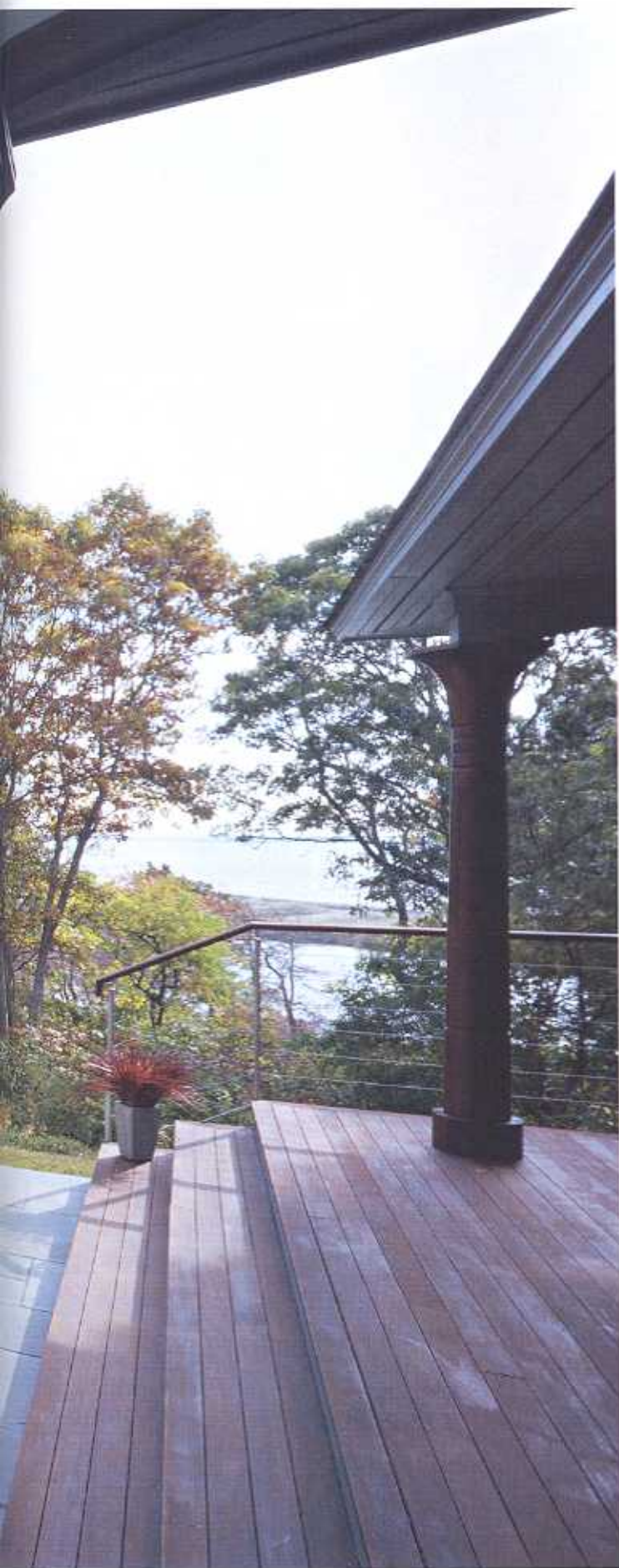


■ The courtyard in this Woods Hole home overlooks Vineyard Sound and features a sturdy mahogany deck with custom-turned mahogany columns and a bluestone terrace with a thermal finish.





INSIDE OUT

Thanks to its subtle, innovative design, this Woods Hole home experiences nature's ever-changing colors and textures from almost every angle.

When you first take in Jeremiah Eck's work on a secluded lane in Woods Hole, you see right through it. Then you realize that is precisely the point.

The eye is immediately drawn to a graceful front entrance archway that leads a visitor to a hall, then on to an inviting courtyard—an outside living room of sorts, with a view of Vineyard Sound and Martha's Vineyard. Eck's design gives one the impression of passing through the house. "The primary focus is on the outside, not inside," says Eck, a statement that on the surface seems at variance with the role of an architect, but on further reflection is as natural as a pitched roof.

BY GREG O'BRIEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PATRICK WISEMAN



■ The outdoor wraparound deck, visible from the living room, consists of stainless steel posts and cables with a mahogany handrail, a popular design because it does not deter from the surrounding view.



■ Judith Day of Woods Hole designed the surrounding coastal plain according to Falmouth Conservation Commission guidelines. To secure the slopes, Day planted native bearberry, bayberry, and juniper shrubs.

The founding principal of Jeremiah Eck Architects in Boston and a former lecturer in architecture at Harvard Design School, the Columbia University-educated Eck, a fervent advocate for better-designed homes, has turned simple and subtle into an art form.

"I'm convinced the question in architecture is not about big or small, it's about good design or bad design," says Eck, author of the book, *The Distinctive Home: A Vision of Timeless Design*. "I believe that distinctiveness lies in the subtle balance between the site, the floor plan, the exterior elements, and the details." In the end, Eck adds, "it's essential that a house 'belongs,' and that all the pieces—from the way the house faces the water to the arrangement of rooms and windows—create an integrated whole."

Defying architectural stereotypes, this "courtyard house," as Eck calls it, displays a timeless quality. "I call it staying power," says Eck. "Distinctive homes are always a balance of the past and present, and whether humble or grand, awe inspiring or just plain, a home's first impression is made at a distance."

At a distance, the first impression of this U-shaped, gray-green-shingled 3,000-square-foot

INSIDE

home with a low-sloped hip roof is that it indeed "belongs." Literally dug into the side of a wooded coastal bank that slopes to Vineyard Sound—at an angle in places as steep as 30 degrees—the front of the home is compact and intentionally understated, and is more reposeful in the back. The founda-

■ The foyer floor features antique Jerusalem limestone, carefully handpicked by the homeowners, and blends nicely with the couple's collection of international art pieces and tile work.



tion serves as a retaining wall. "The house is hollowed into the ground with a roof on top that gives it a feeling of shelter," notes Eck, who took great pains not to disturb a number of 100-year-old beech trees near the entrance. The house was built by Ralph Cataldo of Cataldo Custom Builders in Waquoit, who has constructed some of the

region's most striking homes, large and small.

By design, the back porch—a courtyard that creates an eclectic outdoor living space that faces warm southwest summer breezes off the sound—is the strongest, most dominant element in the house, built for a couple retiring after a life in the diplomatic corps of Washington, D.C. and the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 104

■ Even the fireplace, made of red Morin waterstruck brick, is transparent, making the view of Vineyard Sound all the more visible. The beaded fir ceiling also complements the wooded outdoors.

